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# THE MADERA COUNTY HISTORIAN

*MADERA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY*

Volume 5 - Number 3 July, 1965


## OUR YOUNG HISTORIANS REPORT

### CONTEST WINNERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| First Prize | | $15.00 |
| Tom Bohna | Grade 5 | Coarsegold |
| Bill Weatherly | Grade 8 | North Fork |
| Second Prize | | $10.00 |
| Sandy James | Grade 7 | Coarsegold |
| Dale Tex | Grade 7 | North Fork |
| Third Prize | | $ 5.00 |
| Mel Espe | Grade 5 | Coarsegold |
| Peggy Morris | Grade 7 | North Fork |
| Honorable Mention | | |
| Ted Espe | Grade 8 | Coarsegold |
| Linda Stockdale | Grade 7 | North Fork |
| Cathy Pettit | Grade 8 | North Fork |

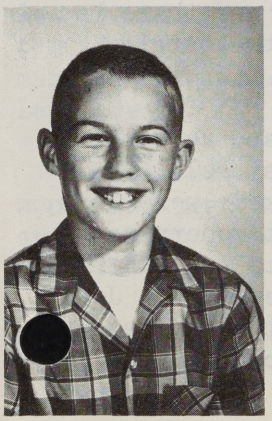
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### HOW TEX MEADOW GOT ITS NAME

by

Tom Bohna

Last summer I helped my Uncle, Virgle Anderson, drive his cattle to the high mountains near Beasore Meadows.



We stopped to have our lunch at Tex Meadow, about 2 miles above Soquel Meadows. I asked my Cousin Smoky if he knew how Tex Meadow got its name. He said, "No, I don't. Do you?" I said, "Yes." So I told him.

Before I was born my folks took care of Tom Beasore, who was past ninety. Many years ago he was a Deputy Sheriff. One day an Indian told Beasore he had seen Frank Tex, notorious outlaw, near Beasore Meadows. With two deputies, he went after the outlaw who had boasted he would kill Beasore on sight.

They caught up with Tex early one morning camped in a meadow. Beasore sent his men around the camp. Beasore called out to Tex, "Drop your guns and come out." Tex walked out with his gun in his hand. Beasore fired a shot into the ground ahead of him. Tex still advanced, so Beasore shot him in the leg. Tex then surrendered. They put him on his horse and took him to jail in Fresno, the County seat then. He later died there. That is how Tex Meadow got its name.

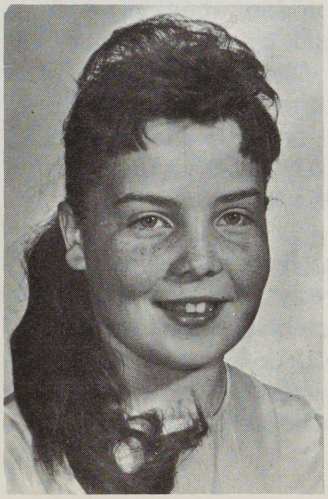
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### THE CHINA STORE
### EARLY DAYS OF RAYMOND

by

Sandy James

A chinaman owned a store near Savage Monument. People used to come from miles around to buy things there.



A man from Raymond wanted some money, so once when the chinaman was alone, he went there, and hit him over the head just as the Chinaman turned around, and saw his face.

Thinking he had killed the Chinaman, he proceeded to rob the store.

Just to play safe, he went back to Raymond and

THE CHINA STORE (Continued)

told everybody that the Chinaman had been killed, and robbed. They formed a posse, and went to the store. When they got there, the Chinaman was very much alive. He saw the man that had tried to kill him, so that was the end of robbing the store.

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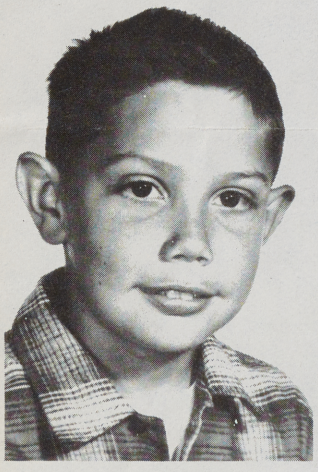
COARSEGOLD RODEOS
by
Mel Espe

It must have been exciting some forty years ago when the cattlemen of our community and surrounding mountain communities gathered here in this beautiful spot in Coarsegold for the first rodeo.

Folks were welcome to camp at the rodeo grounds. Many families would bring their supplies on pack horses and set up their camping equipment the day before the rodeo.

It was a colorful picture with glowing campfires burning, lanterns reflecting their light on folks full of gay laughter. Out in the field grazing was the stock. It was rather musical with the cattle bawling, horses neighing, the pack mules braying all through the night to the tune of tinkling cowbells. If you listened closely howling coyotes could be heard giving their welcome.

There was a Western dance held at the old Coarsegold Dance Hall which was located just above the store. Everyone danced until the sun came up.



The rodeo stock was furnished by local ranchers. There was never a shortage of bucking stock. Never was there a lack of cowboys for the rodeo events.

These rodeos were held every year until 1937. Fourteen years later the residents of Coarsegold revived the colorful Western rodeo and today you will find our community working toward another great show scheduled for May 2nd and 3rd.

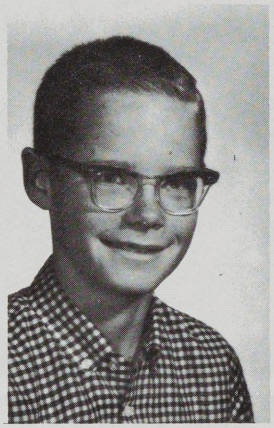
The rodeo has come a long way since its birth and is getting bigger and better each year. We are very proud of it.

* * * * *

HISTORIC TELEPHONE COMPANY COMES UP TO DATE
by
Bill Weatherly

Mrs. Leota Bigelow, a strong willed woman, felt she "just had" to talk with her mother without traveling a mile down the road where her mother lived. She decided to order by mail two telephones at a cost of $11.00 each. In 1908 she and her young son Jess strung a line from tree to tree to her mother's house in O'Neals.

Her husband Harmon liked the idea. In fact, he liked it so much that in 1910 he and Jess strung a line from tree to tree from his home to North Fork. The distance was nearly 10 miles. This telephone helped him greatly in his stage line business that ran from Madera to the fast growing Bass Lake Region. It worked fine so he extended the line to Friant.



Many people along the way also liked the idea and bought phones and hooked them into the line.

The new system sped up traffic on Harmon's stage route but as in most businesses, difficulties showed up. One night Harmon got as far as Friant on his way home. He tried to reach his wife by phone but two stubborn women were talking on the line and simply refused to give it up. Harmon decided then and there he was going to extend his line to the outside world.

Shortly afterward in 1911 he and Jess put up 16 miles of line to the nearest Bell connection in Clovis. The only workers were Jess, Harmon, and a hired man. Without modern machinery to lift the poles into place and other such help this proved to be quite a job. Jess well remembers the 750 poles that he helped install. He also remembers sleeping in the haymows of barns along the way. If you have

HISTORIC TELEPHONE COMPANY (Continued)

driven from Friant to Clovis you can see some of the same posts. Imagine what a job it must have been.

Harmon had to raise $16,000 to pay for the 750 poles and 16 miles of wire. $16,000 is a large sum of money now. Imagine what it was worth in 1912! The money was obtained though from the funds of the stage route, and the cattle ranch which Harmon ran on the side.

In 1912 the "Bigelow Telephone Company" was officially organized and on its way.

In 1944 Harmon Bigelow passed on and Jess took over the company's operations. By 1948 the phone company had 450 miles of line and $100,000 worth of equipment. Eight people, working full time, were necessary to furnish adequate service to 85 subscribers (nearly 600 people) of the mountains, forest country of southern Madera and Fresno counties.

In the same year, 1948, Jess turned his attention from his 6,000 acre cattle ranch to the phone company. The problems were obvious. The corporation just simply wasn't making enough money to pay for its expenses. Again in the same year Jess took $15,000 from his ranch funds and put it into the telephone company. The money helped temporarily but it was plain to see that the company wouldn't have enough money to extend to such places as Huntington Lake.

In 1957 Jess decided to reorganize the firm into a closed family corporation. With this change business was carried on over the dinner table. Jess renamed it the Ponderosa Telephone Company.

The company then borrowed $186,000 from a telephone equipment manufacturer. With this loan it managed to cut over to the dial system in North Fork, Friant, and Auberry, and made plans to add an exchange in the Shaver Lake area.

Soon it was plain to see that still more money was needed to extend to the Shaver Lake area (which looked like a playground for goats).

Jess soon realized that only a REA loan would do the job. He submitted a design prepared by his company's consulting engineer for REA's consideration in February, 1961. In July of that year the loan was granted in the amount of $1,100,000 of which part would pay back the $186,000 debt.

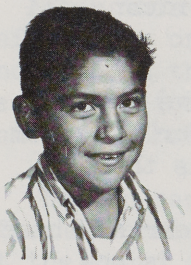
Plant construction got underway in August of 1962. The new system to Huntington Lake was fully completed in the summer of 1964.

You can expect nothing else of a telephone company which started because a woman wanted to talk to her mother.

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AN INDIAN HOUSE WITH NO CORNERS
by
Dale Tex

Indians were seemingly coming out from everywhere; their number was about fifteen hundred or more and their tribe was Miwols.



Where were they going? They were going to Wasama, and to the Round House for one of their many annual gatherings.

The Round House was made up of wooden poles buried in a circle-like pattern, to form a round room which had no corners. The roof was made of tree bark and deer skins, and in the middle of the roof was a large hole used for the escape of smoke from an open fire. The fire was usually built on the dirt floor in the center of the house.

The Indians built arbors to give shade to the many who were there, as the Round House was only twenty-five feet across. It would be ridiculous to try to put fifteen hundred Indians into a house of this size, so the Round House was mainly used for storage of food for the feast.

The white man came in about the 1850's and completely upset the Indian's way of life. The white men were trying to gather the Indians to put them on a reservation. After gathering only a few, the rest of the Indians fled into the hills and hid.

AN INDIAN HOUSE (Continued)

The Round House was then left alone, no more feasts or annual gatherings until something could be done about the trouble between the white men and the Indians. After the Round House was badly torn and worn with age, it was burned to the ground.

Under the leadership of John Jacobs and James Roane, the Round House again was built in 1903. The second Round House was built with rough board walls with a roof of wooden shakes. It was built like the first Round House.

The Indians could again hold their gatherings as before.

Today, after many years, the Round House sits all alone, and is sharing a lot with an old Indian cemetery. This is all owned by a member of the Indians' conqueror, the white man. It is just like the first Round House was, it is also worn and torn with age, but this time it will have to fall apart by itself because it is now just another part of history in the American Indians' past.

An Indian with humor might have said, "Here come the white men, head for the Round House, they can't corner us there."

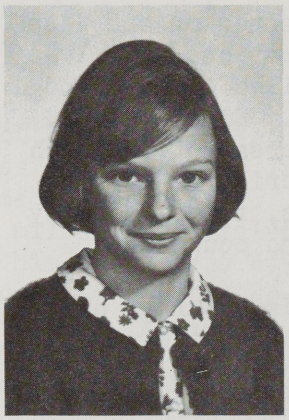
This Round House is located near Ahwahnee and the old Indian name "Wasama" is now called "Wasuma."

* * * * *

SIERRA KNOWLEDGE
by
Peggy Morris

Who were they? Where did they come from? What did they eat? Where did they get the beads? What do the designs mean? Well, I guess you are wondering what in the world I am talking about. To begin with, I am talking about the mysterious Monos and I am the Sierra Nevada Mt. Range. That's right! I am a mountain range. I know you probably think it's strange for a mountain range to be telling the story of Mono Indians but do you know of anyone living now besides me who was here when the Monos came to North Fork? Of course you don't!

Well, to get on with my story, no one really knows where the Mono Indians came from but I know they've been here for over one hundred years. Their children and children's children were born and raised in the North Fork area. They never had to worry over food because there was plenty of game and fish. They hunted deer, rabbit, quail, squirrels and a variety of fish. After killing an animal the Monos didn't waste any usable part. After killing a deer they would dry some of its meat for winter, tan its hide for clothes, and use the sinew for bows and arrows.



In the summer the women would collect acorns and berries. They would grind the acorns into a flour-like substance and use the berries for a delicious cider. So you see the Monos would never run out of food.

Many years later the Spaniards came and wanted to trade silver dollars for food, but the Indians were very leary of silver dolla and didn't want to trade. But the Monos saw the Spaniards' lovely but worthless beads and trinkets and they traded eagerly. The Indians sewed some of these beads on their baskets for decoration and you can still see them today.

Most of the basket designs tell a story but the most interesting and well known baskets are the girl and boy baskets. The girl basket has the diamond design copied from a rattlesnake and the boy's basket has straight lines which represent arrows.

This concludes my story. I hope you liked it and if you are ever in North Fork why don't you visit our Indians?

* * * * *

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN
by
Linda Stockdale

What I am about to relate to you is a tr story about something I love dearly. As a child I loved horses and I had a special

passion for wild horses. Of course, I was not born when the wild horses ran on Kennedy Table. Oh! I forgot you don't know about the horses. Well I was thrilled to hear the story myself so I know you will be, too.

Once the land all around O'Neals had hardly any fences on it, so any livestock that was not penned up was allowed to run free. I don't know the exact year, but it was around 1930, a thoroughbred stallion called "Capacal" got loose. This horse belonged to Bill Kennedy and he headed up to Kennedy Table. (At that time Kennedy Table and some of the land around it belonged to Bill Kennedy.) "Capacal" gathered a small band of mares and as most bands of horses do, this one grew larger. Finally it developed into a herd of one hundred and seventy head of wild horses.

Since no one was training them, the horses grew wild. There were no fences to hold them and no saddles to burden them. Every year Bill Kennedy and Wes Qualls branded the horses and gelded the stud colts.

Since the horses could roam anywhere they wanted to, they ate a lot of crops and grass. Most of the ranchers around O'Neals raised cattle and wanted this grass for their cattle.

A group of the ranchers got together and in the early spring of 1938 Bill Ryan, Ralph Walton, Gene Nix, Tom Kennedy, Red Morris, Mitch Owens and their speedy mounts set out to corral the wild horses. The table was very rocky and as the thundering hooves of the wild horses struck the stones the men could smell the hooves getting hot. These six men ran the horses for a couple weeks.

Near the house where Bill Kennedy lived, there was a round corral. If several head of horses were near the corral, men would drive them in and catch them. Then they would move them down to a corral on Bill Ryan's ranch. In this way they finally got one hundred head of wild horses captured. This was called the big round up because one hundred head were captured and only 70 head were left on the table.

The first 100 head were shipped to San Luis Obispo. The horses that did not buck too hard and viciously were divided up. A certain number of horses were sold to Salinas and a certain number were sold to other rodeos for wild horse rides and bareback broncs.

Some of the horses were in outstanding condition and were very fine breeds, but the top price paid for one of them was thirty-five dollars.

The house where Bill Kennedy lived was southeast of the ranch house where Rose Kennedy, his sister, lived. The round corral by Bill's place was made of pine poles. The gate was seven feet high and the sides were higher. This corral is not standing now but in those days it was quite well hidden by brush. By the time the horses realized it was there they could not help but go intoit. Jackasses and donkeys joined up with the band of wild horses and since they were smaller than the horses, some of them would escape under the bars of the gate.

The place where Rose Kennedy lived is still standing. Even though it is quite aged, the corral is still used.

After this round up about 70 head were left to run on the table. The same ranchers who were on the big round up came on the second one (only this time Bill Kennedy came with them).

The men ran the horses on the table and after several days they got them corralled at the round corral where Rose Kennedy lived. The walls are about eight feet high so a horse could not escape easily. Around 70 horses were captured in this second round up. Most of the horses were sold to local people. All the horses were either brown, bay, sorrel, or black so there were no brightly colored horses in the band.

All of the men went on these round ups just for fun and they were not paid in money for what they had done. Enjoyment and pleasure was what paid off and maybe that was better than money.

These ranchers had captured and sold 170 head of sly, tricky, wild horses in two years, because in 1940 the last wild horse was caught. Are these days gone forever or will they come back?

* * * * *

NORTH FORK'S YESTERDAY AND TODAY
by
Cathy Pettit

1942 brought great interest to a little town, with general stores, a small garage and a sportsman's hotel. Besides the business section of town, a lumber mill was being started with hopes of success.

Construction of the sawmill was started in the middle of 1942. On April first of 1943, the first log was sawed into lumber. The sawmill of North Fork cut under nine million feet of lumber. That wasn't bad for a new mill considering the roads for logging were still being made. Between 1942 and 1943 there were over 130 men to operate the mill. After the mill went into full operation, people from all over moved in and helped the community grow.

From practically a wide spot in the road in 1942, North Fork has grown into a prosperous community which today boasts of just about every kind of a store anybody would want, including several grocery stores, a drugstore, hardware store, jewelry shop, radio service, three hotels, a movie theater, several restaurants, shoe repair shop, several service stations, two garages, a dress shop, and many more, with even a soda fountain and hamburger hangout for the teenagers. To watch over the health and welfare of the community, a doctor, deputy sheriff, and a Justice of the Peace have been added in the last few years. All of these shops and services were made necessary by the rapid increase in population after the mill was built and went into operation.

The mill provided building boards and wooden boxes for the San Joaquin Valley. The many supplies needed by the mill were purchased in North Fork and towns in the San Joaquin Valley.

North Fork's yesterday is composed of many activities. The town was made up of a modern drugstore which served the needs of drugs and sundries. The hardware supplies were tools, appliances and paint, just to name a few items. The town had a 400 seat theater which provided the entertainment for the area. One of the several cafes was the Corral which was the popular meeting place for the teen-age crowd. There were several service stations. A shoe shop supplied the mill men with plenty of boots. The most important building in North Fork was the doctor's office. Out of town there was the North Fork Union School and the sawmill.

North Fork today has changed a little. It has a new post office and the town has several stores and shops. Out of North Fork is a beautiful new school which is half built. The mill of North Fork is still the number one mill in Madera County and we hope it will always be that way. Many beautiful homes have been built and the population has increased. The building of North Fork from old to new has been a success.

* * * * *

THE FOURTH OF JULY IN YOSEMITE VALLEY
by
Ted Espe

In the early 1900's a yearly event was held on the 4th of July, called Yosemite Valley Field Days.

Many people, near and far, traveled by horseback, spring wagon and some cars to this affair, which was a three day celebration.

Road conditions were very poor, merely a wide dusty trail, which can be viewed today from various spots of our beautiful highway to Yosemite. It makes us realize our ancestors were very brave and determined to travel such narrow trails following along rocky rims looking down into the gushing Merced River.

It took three days to reach Yosemite by horse and buggy. The first day's travel ended at Fish Camp. From Fish Camp the wagons headed out for the next day's journey which ended at Wawona Camp Ground. Most always folks from many miles around would join together and form a caravan, making the trip most enjoyable, camping together and spending the evening visiting.

Bright and early the next morning the wagons were loaded and the caravan would travel on to Yosemite, arriving in time to join in on the first day of entertainment which was foot races, sack races, and

FOURTH OF JULY IN YOSEMITE VALLEY (Cont'd.)

horse races. Large sums of money were won at these events, some of this talent was [illegible] competition.

As evening rolled on many a lad and lassie found themselves dressing up for the dance that was held at Camp Curry.

At the old Indian Camp Ground you would find a form of poker played by the Indians. This game was played with two small bones from the foreleg of a deer, and it was hid in your hands behind your back then brought forward for the other players to guess in which hand the bones were.

The Rodeo was held on Sunday and riding broncs was the main feature. Unlike the rodeos of today, the cowboys rode the bronc until he quit bucking instead of the eight seconds of today.

At one of these rodeos the great bucking horse "Steamboat" was featured. This story has been of great interest to me because I was told that my great grandfather drew this critter's name and came closer to riding him than anyone else. Steamboat was [illegible]er conquered by any man.

After the Rodeo, wagons were loaded and the long journey toward home began.

* * * * *

The stories included in this issue are the work of students of the Coarsegold and North Fork Elementary Schools.

No attempt by the editors of the Historian has been made to change any statement made by the writers of these stories. They are exactly as submitted to the judges with the exception of corrected spelling where necessary.

This is the second year the Historian has published stories from the contest winners.

This contest is the joint effort of the Madera County Historical Society and the Coarsegold Farm Bureau. Mr. Nathan Sweet [illegible]Oakhurst has worked with the Schools and the Farm Bureau to complete the project.

Space would not permit publishing every story submitted.

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NEW MEMBERS FOR 1965

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|---|---|
| Elsie Garner | Robert R. Mariscotti |
| Matilda Wright | Helen M. Mariscotti |
| Amanda Dustheimer | Marilyn Neely |
| Elvira Ahles | Cecil Neely |
| H. M. Anthony | Marshall Hughes |
| Velma E. Anthony | Hank Johnston |
| Johanna Harriman | Grant Spotts |
| George H. Crooks | Lee Spotts |
| Medora B. Johnson | T. A. Casner |
| Addie Mitchell | A. L. Peime |
| Darrell Maddox | C. Leigh Riley |
| Julia Harris Hays | James F. Douglass |
| Lilian E. Christianna | Mrs. James F. Douglass |
| F. F. Latta | Lou Evon |
| Elizabeth Berg | Robert C. Arnold |
| Herman Nygren | Octa Dearborn |
| Ralph H. Spotts | Allen R. Harder |
| Roberta S. Spotts | P. H. ("Bud") Enochs |
| Lina Schubert | Michael Pistoresi |

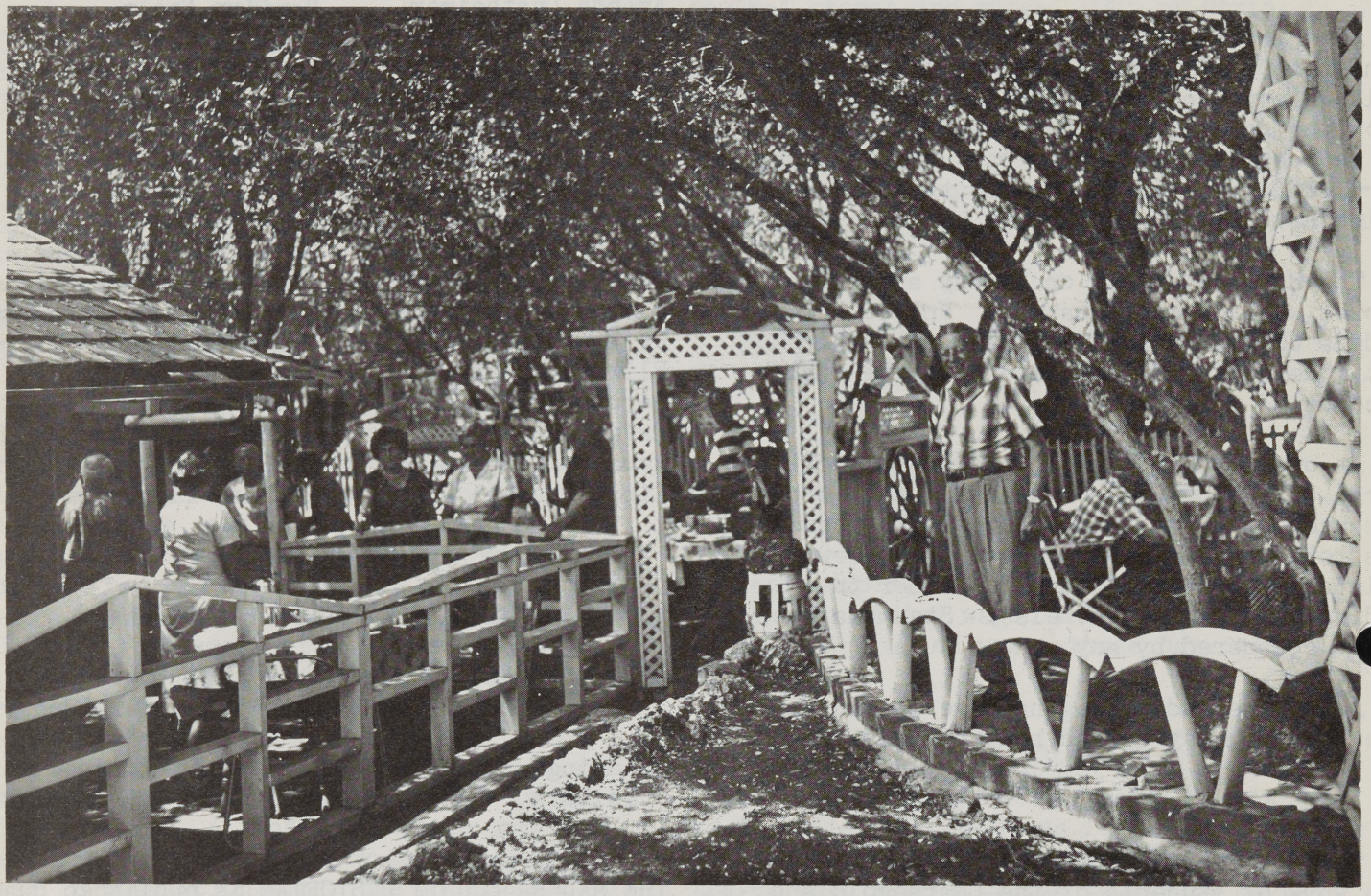
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THE MADERA COUNTY HISTORIAN

Contributors - Students of Coarsegold and North Fork Elementary Schools.

Managing Editors - Madera County Historical Society Board of Directors

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Genial Al LeGras was host for the July 31 meeting of the Madera County Historical Society at his home in Ahwahnee. Members enjoyed a conducted tour through Mr. LeGras' "Little Museum", a result of thirty years of antique collecting. Afterward, a potluck luncheon was set in the lovely and immaculate garden.